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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "DAN GRAHAM", is centered on the page. The signature is written in a bold, blocky, slightly irregular style. The name "DAN" is on the top line and "GRAHAM" is on the bottom line, both within a rectangular frame that has a slightly distressed or torn edge appearance.

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Date of the document: Unknown

Title: INTERVIEW WITH DAN QUINTESSA

Published in: Unpublished

Origine: Dan Graham studio

Added by Unbuilt Archive, on the 26th of March, 2019

We were talking about the trend towards the spectacle in art. Do you think that artists are trying too hard these days in terms of spectacle?

Starting with the Tate Modern, which is like a corporate atrium, museums seem to need spectacles to fill up the space and attract the general public. The more people who come to a museum show, means that the museum can get guaranteed corporate funding. For me, also, it's part of the trend toward art works being high-tech spectacles, as well as more simplistic. I have just finished doing a talk in Berlin, and along with showing my work, I showed images of favored video works that didn't involve digital or high-tech displays; there have been many great videos using low-tech equipment before the current trend towards high-tech spectacle. One example I mentioned was the work of the political video artist Darcy Lange, from New Zealand, who worked mostly in England. His work was political and somewhat Marxist in the sense that he examined the ideas of work; he saw work as an aesthetic occupation. One of my favorite works of his is a series called *Work Studies*, which involved documenting teachers teaching various subjects. He contrasted two teachers teaching the same subject; the first teacher was teaching in a working-class town, Bradford in England, whereas the second teacher was teaching the same subject in the nearby, upscale city of Leeds. He then played the documentation for each of the teachers as feedback for them to improve their teaching. Along with his *Work Studies*, he also documented farming in rural Spain; he said that his farm work videos were influenced by Millet. I also mentioned the work of Nam June Paik, and that his work was basically humorous metaphors for video, like his

famous piece of a Buddha “statue” looking at a TV set that showed a candle. He also used television program images which were distorted in a somewhat psychedelic manner. His work was informal and somewhat hand-made. I also showed images of the early time-delay works of Bruce Nauman. Nauman rented simple video-tape recorders from a store, and used primitive tape-loops linking two video recorders to create simple video time-delay effects. Nauman, *per se*, was not a video artist; he simply integrated works involving the body, usually of the spectator, in architecture and time-delayed effects. In my early video work, I was totally influenced by Nauman’s use of video. In a work like *Present Continuous Past(s)*, which is now owned by Centre Pompidou, I originally used non-digital, simple tape-loops to create time-delay effects. The work was more like a ‘fun-house’ situation in which spectators could see themselves time-delayed. As I had no money to invest in digital equipment, I quickly lost interest in doing more of these kinds of video works.

Why do you think the spectacle is so popular?

I think spectacles are crowd-pleasing, and work well in large museum entrance areas. I think museums change every decade. At the moment, spectacle is quite important. I have to mention that I totally dispute, dislike this idea of Andrea Fraser’s of making art that would critique the museum; she calls her work ‘institutional critique.’ I also don’t like the similar, equally simplistic ideas of Buren which I find reductive and ahistorical. I think

his ideas are basically Cartesian; he thinks the museum is historically fixed. I think museums have evolved, decade by decade and are constantly changing, which is the reason I love museums. I've done work that deals with the changing of museums, using various parts of museums that are not necessarily for showing art. For example, I think the large, modernist museum lobbies are often also 'romantic' pick-up places. For the Carnegie International at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburg, I placed a two-way mirror heart-shaped pavilion which one could enter. People could see each other on both the inside and outside this 'heart;' gazing at each other might create a romantic moment. My solution was a bit more intimate than using high-tech spectacle. I was thinking that the people of Pittsburg, which I see as maybe the gateway to the American Midwest, liked the idea of greeting cards which used heart motifs for special moments.

You've said that some of your early work like *Homes for America* is often misinterpreted.

October magazine's Buchlovian interpretation of *Homes For America*, is that the work has the idea of attacking Minimal Art and at the same perhaps being a sociological critique of the suburbs. Actually, I see *Homes For America* as being an extension of Minimal Art ideas in terms of seeing the suburban layout as an extension of the urban city plan. The use of the city plan in other works of mine, such as the DIA Foundation roof piece, was definitely influenced by Sol Lewitt. Sol read many books on urbanism,

such as those by Lewis Mumford; he was fascinated by New York City's plan being a grid. Sol also mentioned to me that his favorite painting was a work of De Chirico that depicted Turin's city plan. Another influence was Judd's article on the 'neo-classical' city plan of Kansas City. Some people have caught on to the fact that *Homes For America* involves an element of parody and ironic humor, except for the over-serious art critics who simply thought it was an sociological critique of the suburbs. Another influence for me was Godard's film, *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her*, which depicted the new high-rise housing cropping at the edge of Paris. For me, this was of interest because I had memories of the area of New Jersey where I grew up that was also at the edge of the suburbs just where the new suburbs meet the countryside. T.J. Clark writes that he had an appreciation of the van Gogh paintings in which he depicted the very edge of Paris, bordering the countryside. The supposed sterility of the suburbs, that was the subject of 'think pieces' in both popular and serious magazines, such as *Esquire*, often had texts which focused on the phenomenon of the suburbs. In these magazines there were often texts written by sociologists that were illustrated with color photographs by such formalist photographers like Stephen Shore. I think in *Homes For America*, I was parodying these articles. Finally, I was also influenced by my listening to rock songs, for example, *Nowhere Man* by the Beatles, and *Mr. Pleasant* by the Kinks. In general, in the mid-60's, one of the most fashionable clichés was about the suburban tract homes being sterile, empty and vacant.

Another influence on *Homes For America*, I think, was an early Judd review that I read of a Chamberlain show consisting in sculptures of crushed car parts; Judd said this

work seemed to be about 'build-in obsolescence.' For me, much of Chamberlain's work seems to be about cultural shifts, especially involving post-World War II design. Detroit was producing new, glamorous cars as 'almost works of art.' I also see Walter de Maria's work as dealing with the glamour of 50's, post-World War II design objects; de Maria's last work was actually his version of the glamorous Detroit luxury car produced in the 50's. None of these glamorous design objects were produced to last that long. As I grew up in the 50's, I noticed how flimsy and quickly built the suburban house environments were; they were not meant to last forever. In many ways I was more influenced by Judd's incredible early reviews than by his sculptures.

Which were?

It seems that Judd particularly loved Chamberlain, and Judd also wrote brilliantly about Oldenburg. In one of his reviews, Judd implied that Oldenburg's work often dealt with sexuality in mass media. I think Oldenburg may have had a huge influence on Jeff Koons when Koons was in art school in Chicago.

What kind of person was Judd to be around?

I've heard that it seems he was the kind of guy who doesn't like to be touched that much. Possibly. Just from my interactions with him, he seemed a little bit uptight. I think

that being enshrined in DIA was not a good idea for him. I've heard that in Marfa, he was shooting rifles at planes. He became kind of paranoid.

You've said you refused to join DIA, why was that?

In many ways, I think DIA ruined a lot of great artists, that's one reason I decided not to join it when Dan Flavin got me together with Heinrich Friedrich to propose that idea. I thought that in Friedrich's idea of giving artists their own 'quasi- spiritual,' ideal, isolated space in which people could almost religiously see their work, it was hard to get a real idea of the work in the context of other 'normal' artists. A good example: it took me a long time to finally understand the importance of the work of Walter de Maria, because I had very few chances of actually seeing it. In the case of Flavin, I think his work exhibited at DIA Beacon is now totally out of context. For me, DIA Beacon is almost a mausoleum. I remember seeing Flavin's work first in group shows where it seems that he intended for the light to destroy all the other art works that were on the walls. A key part of Flavins work was the way he dealt with the architecture of the gallery or museum. Flavin's gallery installations highlighted how the conditions of the white wall, and the lighting fixtures, determined the context for the meaning of art (I think this is the beginning of the reductive ideas that artists like Buren came out of, although Buren's work seems somewhat of a reductive trademark, and simplify the complexity of Flavin's work). I see Flavin's work as being primarily about light; I know that he was very influenced by the Hudson River School painters, or Luminists like Bierstadt. It seems

that Flavin was also fascinated by colored advertising lights that he encountered in Times Square. Finally, another reason I didn't want to be a part of DIA's isolated art spaces is because I feel my work to be more populist and against self-sufficient aesthetics. Also, I thought, that by putting the artists' work in an isolated space, in general, made the work unable to communicate, both with the public and the work of other artists, and I didn't like the idea of it being enshrined in a 'quasi-sacred' space.

The way I read the DIA Foundation's founder, Friedrich's, idea of art, is that it seemed very important that you knew that he was from Munich, the city of Ludwig II, who believed in the greatness of a God-like genius such as Wagner. Friedrich was a businessman who bought into the 19th century Munich idea that artists should be placed in a kind of 'Valhalla.' In Munich, Ludwig II believed that art and music should be placed in an aesthetic, sacred area, and the spectator should see the work only in special 'quasi-spiritual' situations in which the viewer could appreciate its God-like qualities. Another reason I decided not to be part of DIA is that it seems to isolate the artists from crass everyday life situations. I think isolation can be a danger for artists; myself, I have moments of being depressive, and I need to be close to artist friends. I also heard that Fred Sandback, who was part of DIA, was depressive and killed himself after some important recognition; It seemed that isolation was not a good idea for artists who have moments of depression. My challenging the idea of DIA as a special 'quasi-religious' space allowed me to have a very good angry beginning point for the DIA roof piece. I also wanted to challenge the 70's post-80's idea of neo-60's artists like Jorge Pardo, whose work was featured in the lower level of DIA when I presented my rooftop

piece. It was the fashion in the late 70's for younger artists to believe in a kind of fake utopian idea of the 60s, which would contest the more corporate, recent '80's' period. Walter Benjamin's essay that nobody seems to have read, where he said, that if you don't like the last decade, art should try to re-create a fantasy utopia of the past. A good example would be Hans Ulrich Obrist's show called *Utopia Station*, which I refused to be in, because I think the '60's,' which I was part of, was certainly not about utopia. As I remember, the it was a mixture of dystopia and misguided, false utopianism. I also remember that artists, myself included, were 'fellow traveler hippies.'

In the DIA rooftop piece, a goal was to create a continuity between the 70's and the '80's' decades. In the former tool shed, I combined an 80's style IBM atrium café with cappuccino and French pastries, which were available at a reasonable price, and in the same space I installed a video monitor, in which viewers could democratically select and play 70's artists' videos, which involved works dealing with performance, dance or music. My ideas for the DIA piece was to create continuity between decades in opposition to the then current 'neo-60's' art world fascination/falsification of the fantasized 'utopia' of the 60's. In the video catalogue for the exhibition, I documented New York City parks of the 70's and the corporate atrium of the 70's, and I focused on the area of Battery Park City, which had become a corporate park. I documented the period before Battery Park City was build, when the area was basically a raw, sandy landfill, that was used by performance artists, musicians and dancers.

Do you think people interpret your work as utopic, how do you want it to be seen?

I actually think my work now is more about historical overlays. In my article *Eisenhower and the Hippies*, I tried to coalesce the 50's and 60's, which seem to be in contradiction. In European historical landscape parks, there's often an overlay of different decades, which I encountered when I showed in socialist FRAC's or in Skulptur Projekte Munster. These overlays of different landscape periods became an important context for my art interventions. Walter Benjamin said that he thought for history to function ideologically, in terms of being actual history, it should involve a continuity between decades, otherwise, a neo-utopian earlier decade would replace the idea of the flow of history. This false history, according to Benjamin, would be simply 'historicism'... a falsification of true history.

Some of your favorite artists are painters.

Maybe because I have Capricorn ascendant, as I get older I'm more appreciative of recent historical art periods. In my library I have books of three favorite 19th Century artists, Thomas Eakins, John Martin and all the Hudson River School painters like Bierstadt and Thomas Cole, and the German artist Philip Otto Runge. Partly though

discussions with my friend Peter Fischli, I've realized that some of my work involving the gaze of the spectator, has a relationship to the work *Le Grande Jatte* by George Seurat. The work shows people lying on the ground, outdoors, and people enjoying the spectacle inside the circus. Peter said that the people lying down are probably workers, as their clothes are stiff and they probably just got off work. The people inside the circus are probably middle-class family groups enjoying seeing each other as others see them, and also the performers. Maybe now I'm becoming more interested in Impressionism because the aspects of sitting on the bench or lying on the grass are important. I've done a work called *Seurat, not Manet*. I think that maybe Manet was too 'bousie.'

What attracts you to that work?

I was very interested in a large painting by John Martin, which is in the Tate collection, and which illustrated the first science fiction novel, Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*. A lot of Martin's large-scale work seems to combine the biblical idea of the apocalypse with the horrors of the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Martin's paintings are absolutely amazing; originally, I wanted to use one of Martin's paintings at the beginning of my video *Rock My Religion*. *Rock My Religion* begins with the Shakers' ecstatic dancing, and my intuition was that hardcore music, and rock music in general, tried to integrate the deafening noise of the Industrial Revolution into a religious, aesthetic experience. People have now rejected Martin because his paintings are too over-sized. The British

establishment prefers Turner; Martin's paintings remind the critics too much of Cecil B. DeMille. In fact, Martin also painted on glass and is thought by the French to be a pioneer of proto-Cinema. Another artist that I particularly love is Thomas Eakins, because his work shows the American 19th Century interest in athleticism. His work also had a very open kind of look at sexuality. I discovered all these artists by going to museums, because when I first started doing art I knew nothing about historical art. From Robert Smithson, a friend of mine, I discovered Mannerism. He told me his favorite painters were two mannerist artists, Tintoretto and Pontormo.

What do you think about the direction art is going in now?

I've always thought that this idea of Modernism is quite empty. I actually don't know what it means. It seems, many young artists now come from art schools where they have been taught art as a profession, and try to justify their work through quoting academic text. I see myself as somewhat of a gifted amateur. This is how I view one of my favorite American artists, Ed Ruscha. At the Whitney Downtown Program, students are required to read and memorize academic texts about art and philosophy. To me, I think this is very dangerous and narrow. It's almost like catechism in Catholic school.

I just think what's happening now is oversimplification. My assistant who went to art school in Germany says that young artists in Germany at the moment want to do art like Michael Asher's... as misinterpreted by Andrea Fraser. His work is really not about 'institutional critique,' if anything, it comes out of Flavin. These simplistic ideas of institutional critique have been appropriated by the gang of John Knight, Buren and Buchloh into a very simple kind of museum critique. I also think that Tino Sehgal's work is popular at the museums because it is basically an alibi; museums can buy a supposed critique of museums for their collection.

Speaking of texts, how did reading magazines affect your early work?

My earliest work had a lot to do with my love of magazines. I used to read rock magazines like *Sounds* and *MNE*, two British rock magazines. I also loved science fiction novels and hippy comics. All these magazines were pulp magazines, not slick magazines. I got many art ideas from popular magazines including *Time* magazine, and sometimes, fashion magazines. In fashion, there has always been some very good conceptual ideas. My early disposable magazine page work, which were meant to be disposable, were influenced by paper dresses as disposable, which had a brief vogue in fashion. I'm a huge Vivienne Westwood fan; I think her work is often extremely conceptual. A few years ago, I was asked to do a runway design for Paris Fashion Week for the Celine line. I did it very quickly; it was a variation of a piece I did for the

rooftop at Le Corbusier's Marseille block. I like the way fashion moves very fast, and in that way, come up with quick solutions that are conceptually based. Although there's not much of a market for my art work at the moment, I seem to be now photographed in stylish fashion magazines.

Do you make most of your pieces very impulsively?

Oh yes, I think my work is both impulsive, maybe because I'm Aries, and totally intuitive. I think a lot of my work comes from misunderstandings of ideas from physics and philosophy, as often depicted in sci-fi novels. It seems that some of the best work I've done has always been collaborative. I consciously or unconsciously chose to work with other people who I admire. For the work I did for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's summer rooftop, I choose to collaborate with a landscape architect whose work I admired and thought was really genius when I first encountered it. The concept for the piece, which I developed with Gunther Vogt, took about maybe two days to conceptualize. My starting point, what the curator Sheena Wagstaff told me, was that the works should be about the treetops in Central Park, which viewers could see from the roof. I noticed that at the fence edge of the rooftop there were very scraggly, little hedges, and you could look through them and see the park's treetops. From the roof, visitors could also see the tall buildings of New York. The rooftop was often used by tourists who were interested in observing the general layout of 'the big city,' Central Park and the tall buildings. The Met situation was rather similar to the piece on the DIA

rooftop, in that both rooftops were basically observation decks, not unlike the Empire State Building, where you could observe the city looking in many directions. When I first looked at the existing floor at the Met roof, it seemed to have the remnants of old astro-turf. Thinking that 'cultured' people, such as those who read the New York Times, tend to dislike astro-turf, I thought that this would be a good reason I should use astro-turf for the flooring. My collaborator, Gunther Vogt, located a new refined astro-turf product and created an earth mound where people could lie down. Walking around and through the installation of the Met, the spectators experienced the work at the time of the day, and according to the time of the day, the light conditions created an almost fun-house, kaleidoscopic view of the skyscape changing during the day as well as images of the city. In general, the piece was something of a fun-house.

Where does the use of hedges in your work come from? Are they another reference to the suburbs?

They are definitely a reference to the edge of the city, which is the suburbs. The first time I used hedge material was for a work that was part of the every-three-year International Garden Year, which that year was sited in Stuttgart, Germany. For the International Garden Year, a German city is selected for architects to redesign the central part of the city and to display new garden products for people living in the suburbs, such as power-lawnmowers, seed packages, and flowers. Artists were then

asked to design meeting points. I designed as a meeting point a skateboard pavilion because I thought that parks, which usually have playgrounds for small children, don't accommodate teenagers that well. Another work I designed, that was never realized, was *Two-Way Mirror Hedge Labyrinth* -- a combination of two-way mirror that was commonly used in the 80's as cladding for tall office buildings. For me, the two-way mirror office building material represents the center of the city, whereas the hedge would connote the suburban edge of the city where they often defined the property line of a suburban house from the neighbor's house. In Europe, historically, hedge labyrinths were used for baroque gardens. They could also be seen to be metaphors for the labyrinth of the city. In a favorite book of mine, also the favorite book of Sol Lewitt's, *Passing Time*, by Michel Butor, the hero is lost in the labyrinth of a large city in Northern England. What I like about the use of hedges, is that from a distance they're opaque, but up close you can see through them almost transparently. When used in relationship to two-way mirror glass, the hedge's ambiguous quality of being equally transparent and opaque works in relation to the two-way mirror glass, which equally ambiguously, constantly shifts back and forth between being transparent and reflective as the sunlight changes.

How has the corporate city park been something you've dealt with in your work?

I've been interested in the way the city park evolves in relationship to the altering city plan of the city. I saw my DIA rooftop piece as basically a city park as well as a roof top of New York City. As a rooftop, I had the idea that I wanted to combine the slum roof with the penthouse roof. My use of boardwalk material derives from Coney Island, where the edge of the city is in relationship with the ocean or river. When I conceived the DIA piece there had been a plan proposed by Venturi to extend Battery Park City to Chelsea with the West Side Highway being underground and on top of it, a new park. The rubber material I used for the DIA piece was derived from the same material that's used in city parks' playground areas adjacent to slides, making the area child-friendly, so when the children fall down, they won't get hurt. I have written a long article about New York City's corporate atriums. In the 70's, corporate atriums were built as a safe, artificial garden-like area inside the entrances of corporate buildings in a city that was becoming full of dangerous bulwark-like concrete structures built to guard against inner-city gang violence. In one corporate atrium, the Chem-Core, the interior garden created a suburban-like, safe area which sometimes also had high-end stores; the general idea was to recreate the suburban shopping mall. In the Chem-Core atrium, the interior garden was designed to display a flora in relation to different seasons. I saw the corporate atrium as a replication of the suburban house garden; this landscaping of the corporate building's interior, gave the impression that the center of the city was now a safe place, like the suburbs. As an added feature, the interior of the corporate atriums also had surveillance cameras.

What's the evolution of two-way mirror glass?

Two-way mirror glass was first used in America as a way to make large office buildings ecologically efficient. The two-way mirror glass façade reflects the sun and cuts down air-conditioning costs for the interior of the building. I believe that the ecology movement began with the Jimmy Carter administration. Jimmy placed solar panels on the White House and other government buildings. One paradox in the use of the two-way mirror glass for office buildings, is that from the outside the two-way mirror glass reflects only the outside skyscape, and does not allow you to see the people inside. This was quite different from the modernist, transparent glass office buildings where people on the outside could see people working on the inside. This gave the general public the idea of the company's operations and gave them an 'insight' into the corporation's functioning. In the new two-way mirror clad office building, the people inside could look out without being seen by people outside. This created a surveillance situation. Another aspect of the use of two-way mirror glass is the fact that the outside glass displayed the sky, creating an 'eco-friendly' image, or an alibi for the corporation, that would merge the building with the sky. My use of two-way mirror glass in pavilions is not a critique of the alienation of the corporate building; in many ways the work I do tries to create a kind of pleasure area in relationship to the corporate office building, or to use Foucault's notion, my wish was to create a kind of 'heterotopia.' In America, there was always a kind of ambivalent feeling about the corporations. From my point of view, we have to deal with the reality of the city and the city park as we find it. When I'm dealing with corporate buildings, I sometimes situate the piece adjacent to the building, often in the small park.

The park often had benches, which could be used for people on their lunch break or maybe grandparents minding their grandchildren. In the 80's, there were often small parks next to corporate architecture were created to facilitate the employers' lunchbreak needs. My first two-way mirror glass pavilion, *Two Adjacent Pavilions*, which was in Documenta, was not only a pleasurable aesthetic experience but its interior was also used by young backpackers visiting the exhibition who could lie down in their sleeping bags diagonally inside the piece if they did not manage to find lodging.

Where do you think you've done your best pieces?

All my best pieces are the ones that reflect the context in which they're placed. One of my better pieces, in terms of relating to its context, is *Octagon for Munster*. Its form is octagonal, and all of its sides are two-way mirror. The piece was placed in the center of a grass *allée*, one of eight *allées*, creating a landscape garden which surrounded the baroque palace which was octagonal. The work is somewhat of a fun-house for children where children can gaze at each other on the inside and see their friends or parents gazing at them from the outside. The work could be a good photo opportunity for parents, as well as a 'fun-house' for the children. In the center of the *Octagon for Munster* I placed a small wood pole; perhaps I was thinking of Brancusi's pole linking the earth to heaven. The roof was also wood, placed at a 15° slant. I had been thinking of Laugier's 18th Century idea of the 'rustic hut.' The experience being inside the

Octagon for Munster was somewhat kaleidoscopic, and children also could playfully rotate around the pole. When I give lectures and mention this piece, I sometimes note that in the *Jerry Springer* TV show, there was many times be a pole that allowed women, let's say 'horny' housewives, to pretend they were participating in a kind of strip show. That was certainly not conscious on my part. More recently, some of my best pieces have been done in Norway, where the changing light conditions, where the work, sometimes placed in relationship to a mirroring, nearby lake, produces optical plays that for me, resembles the paintings of the American 'luminist' painters, such as Bierstadt. The light in Norway is amazing. A favorite piece of mine is *Curved Two-way Mirror Bisected by a Norwegian Wood Lattice*. Norway is now one of the only remaining socialist countries, and there's an emphasis on regionalism. The Norwegian government provides money for subsidizing sculpture in fairly remote, small towns.

I think that I always need some ideological context for my work. I have never been interested in reductive sociology or Marxism. In working in Europe, I became very interested in French and Scandinavian socialism. When I grew up, after World War II in America, there was an emphasis on an almost socialist idea in communal architecture and children's playgrounds. The artist Noguchi, in America, did playground design work. In Holland, the architect Aldo van Eyck, also designed somewhat avant-garde playgrounds. My mother, who studied Educational Psychology in college, eventually became head of The Head Start Program in Newark. I think, her work with children may have had a subliminal effect on my more recent artwork. Maybe, also, I was reacting against my earlier fears, as a child, of playgrounds and also other children. But it seems

that a lot of recent work of mine deals with the possibility of using education programs to finance newer work of mine involving child's play (the title of a work I did for MoMA's sculpture garden was *Child's Play*). I designed a Children's Daycare Center in which children could entertain themselves in the lobby while the parents moved upstairs to view the main museum exhibition. This work featured computers, CD-ROMs, and cartoons. I expanded some of the ideas in a work called *Waterloo Sunset at the Hayward Gallery*; the work was located on the mezzanine level and constructed with flat and curved two-way mirror glass, as well as perforated metal. The perforated metal created moiré pattern when reflected by the two-way mirror glass – also, they were like peep-holes for children to watch other children on the other child. Children could watch cartoons like *Mickey Mouse* and *Krazy Kat* on computer screens, as well as contemporary cartoons like the *Powerpuff Girls*. The computer display system had touch screens where the children could change the program; not only were cartoons available, but you could also view the Art Council's more mature videos. A ten-year-old boy could possibly, after watching cartoons, touch the screen and view works such as Tracey Emin's *Why Didn't I Become a Dancer*, which dealt with Tracey's sexual prepubescent issues. The space was multifunctional, and as part of the museum's educational program was used for kids to try to make their own version of whatever art that was shown in the museum area.

You really love museums.

What I love about museums is, first of all, the lobby and other social spaces. I feel that the social spaces are important aspects of the museum. That's why I don't understand this idea of deconstructing the museum; I see the museum and its functions as always in transition. Art work could be made in the museum café, the elevators, and of course, the book shop and the gift shop, which, from my point of view, was one of the most important areas for the general public.

So if the museum is always evolving, what do you think is next for museums?

I think, at the moment, museums like to focus on gigantic works easily understood by the general public, placed in their central spaces that are not unlike corporate lobbies, and which are perfect for showing artists whose works is decorative and quasi-architectural, like Olafur Eliasson, or for spectacle high-tech video work by artists like Pierre Huyghe. Cafes near museum entrances are now also used by artist doing 'neo-60's' design work. For instance, Liam Gillick has designed a café for the Guggenheim. In terms of Eliasson and Gillick, I think there is a great misunderstanding that artists can be architects or designers. I think Eliasson's work is successful because his work fits very well the need for new, large, cultural buildings like opera houses to have somewhat monumental, pleasantly colorful works. In general, now, successful artists are designing overscale works that would work very well in corporate collections. My work certainly does not fit into this category. Buren has been able to enlarge his

trademark work to be a kind of a huge corporate signage; placed just outside or on the façade of museums. In general, it seems that the artists that survive financially are all doing trademarks of their earlier ideas. Even a great artist like William Wegman, can do works of his 'Man Ray' dog work to sustain his image, as well as continuing to make wonderful drawings and books – one of my favorite books is *Hello Nature*. I guess I decided a long time ago that I didn't want to repeat myself or concentrate on refining logo-like, self-sufficient Dan Graham 'pavilions.'

Two decades ago, artists thought that architects were part of the establishment, and perhaps they saw architecture as even semi-fascist. As I see myself as basically an architecture tourist, I'm also very pleased that I can write about architecture that I have experienced on a personal level to be published in some important architecture magazines, such as the Italian magazine *Arbitare*. I have no interest in becoming an architect as I see my work as somewhere between art, architecture, design, and literature. More recently, I think my work is basically about cultural periods, which merges historical and cultural time periods. I did *Rock My Religion* as a film dealing with rock music in terms of historical parallels from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, American Protestant ecstasy and rock music. The film connects American Protestantism and ecstasy with rock music. A more recent rock 'n' roll puppet show, *Don't Trust Anyone Over 30*, which continues my rock docks, and is set about the year 1970, the exact time when the 'hippies' moved to the countryside... Around the period of the first Neil Young album. This puppet show is the beginning of seeing art and Rock 'n' Roll in terms of specific cultural periods. I think that when I first began doing art, myself, as well

as many of the artists I knew, considered themselves to be artists-writers. It is in this hybrid area that I can situate some of my best works, and in some ways, I see my work as deriving from literature and dealing more with cultural issues than with aesthetic issues. Maybe the source of my ideas for both doing essays and art began with my reading Walter Benjamin's literary criticism, and developed later into the possibilities of becoming a rock critic as wasn't able to become a fiction writer or literary critic. What's interesting to me now, is that many artists who were originally artist-writers such as Smithson or Wiener, seem to have repressed their early experiments in literature. A good example was Lawrence Weiner's retrospective exhibition at the Whitney, some years ago, in which there is no mentioning of him being a poet. I still think that his best work may have been the early, small book *Statements*, a wonderful hybrid between poetry and radical spectator/consumer kind of art that was basically instructural and consumer oriented instead of complete sculpture objects.

But you know so much about architecture.

I know so much about architecture because I collect many architecture books, and my biggest hobby is architecture tourism. In recent years, I've been asked to write about architecture in architecture and design magazines, including a column that I did for *Domus* on architecture and the architects' astrological signs. This kind of writing makes me quite happy as I can deal with my favorite areas, architecture, and popular magazines clichés... most popular magazines seems to have an astrology column.

Generally, when I write about my personal experience of seeing architecture from both the inside and the outside, the writing is not about theory. People often ask me when I'll start doing architecture. I really have no interest in being an architect. As I think I was very influenced by my first encounter with Dan Flavin and Sol Lewitt, who were both guards at the Russian Constructivist show at MoMA – and Sol Lewitt had direct training as an architect. What I liked about this period of Russian Constructivism is that the work was a hybrid between art, architecture and design. If anywhere, this is where I would situate my work. At the moment, a lot of my work relates to urbanism and landscape architecture. My Rock 'n' Roll puppet show *Don't Trust Anyone Over 30* comes out of theatre and literature. When I first began doing art, the first artist I met, saw themselves somewhere between art and architecture.

What do you think artists don't want to be seen as writer's anymore?

I think what happens is that younger artists have gone to art schools, and they've been taught the idea that being an artist is a professional career. What I liked about the art world in the 60's was that you could do almost anything and if you called yourself an artist, there was an interest in what you were doing. For me, Andy Warhol was a great writer (even though he was dyslexic as well as a great artist). I first got into art because you could do anything in the 60's and call it art, but mainly I stayed in art was because I received free tickets and could travel anywhere in the world when I was doing

international exhibitions. Basically, travelling and visiting museums in different places was a way of educating myself, because I was never educated in the area of art.

Where do you think is a good context for your work?

The best context for my work, I think, is when it is included in large, thematic exhibitions such as Documenta in Germany, Skulptur Projekte Munster or the Venice Biennale. Most of these shows had didactic themes. With Documenta, the theme was almost totally didactic. When I did work for Documenta, my work could use the context to comment on or undercut the themes. In general, what I liked about being in these large shows, is that it's a good way to meet other artists. I remember when I met Fischli & Weiss, we talked about rock music primarily. I feel fairly isolated now, as at this moment I'm not included in these large international theme-shows.

Who is an artist you admire?

I always admired Roy Lichtenstein enormously. For me, his work involves media culture, especially magazines, which is my favorite media form. His work also has a somewhat Jewish, ironic, sense of humor, not so different from the Ramones. Humor in art is very important to me. I think the artist I have learned the most from, and whose work seems to come from many diverse areas, is Dan Flavin. I think, his work, of all the artists I

knew, has influenced me the most. At the moment, I think the greatest living American artist, for me, is Ed Ruscha.

Even though you live in New York?

New York City does not have that many artists who actually live there. I remember that after I introduced the work of Jenny Holzer in my article *Signs* for Artforum, she got pretty quickly famous and moved to upstate New York. I haven't seen her since. People in New York just move to places like upstate New York. I wish the museums would be better here, but I still have a favorite museum, the Morgan Library. I've seen two amazing exhibitions there; one about Flavin that showed not only his drawing but his collection of prints and colored, decorative glass objects, and the Lichtenstein show that featured his early black and white drawings. At the moment, I'm not in that many shows in Europe anymore. My strategy is to try very hard to get works of mine that I would have liked to be in large European exhibitions to be featured in New York museums, because Europeans come to New York City to see art. Europeans as well as Midwestern Americans often come to New York to see the panorama of the city. That's why I thought the piece I did for the DIA rooftop and the roof of the Met, were particularly successful because in many ways because they were both city parks and observation decks such as the observation deck on the Empire State Building. I want my work to be 'tourist-friendly.' I like going to see these works of mine, either in shows

or observations decks, because my biggest hobby is to observe tourists, as they observe my work.